



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 15, 2012

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# Champlain Elementary School Teacher Receives \$25,000 National Milken Educator Award

*The 2012 Vermont “Oscar of Teaching” goes to Matthew Hajdun*

SANTA MONICA, CA (October 15, 2012) — A seemingly routine schoolwide assembly turned into the surprise of a lifetime when the Milken Family Foundation honored – and stunned – Matthew Hajdun, a fourth- and fifth-grade teacher at Champlain Elementary School in Burlington, VT, with a Milken Educator Award. One of education’s most prestigious recognitions, the Award, presented by Dr. Jane Foley, senior vice president of the Milken Educator Awards, comes with a no-strings-attached cash prize of \$25,000.

Among the host of dignitaries on hand to offer congratulations were Vermont Education Commissioner Armando Vilaseca, Susan Bartlett, Special Assistant with the Governor’s Office, Andi Higbee, Burlington Deputy Chief of Police, David Roberts, Burlington Deputy Chief of Fire, Keith Pillsbury, Burlington School Board Chairman, and a host of award-winning Vermont educators.

Matthew Hajdun’s fifth-grade classroom at Burlington’s Champlain Elementary dives into the day with a morning meeting then engages in innovative lessons that frequently take students out of the room and often weaves Spanish into the curriculum. Hajdun spent time teaching in a Honduran orphanage when he graduated from Saint Michael’s College, so he’s well-versed in the language. The classroom is not the only place where you will find this fun-loving educator. He makes surprise visits to the gym, where he rollerblades in as “Mr. Quizner” to ask kids exam questions.

As part of a classroom looping program, Hajdun taught his current students last year as fourth graders. He differentiates instruction, which is grounded in the latest research-based information, and is talented at teaching complex concepts. Highly inclusive, Hajdun is skilled with special education students as well as those who are gifted. He teaches social skills, social responsibility, and hosts family picnics, ice skating parties and movie nights. Students become book buddies with younger pupils and Hajdun has even fashioned a cozy spot in the room for kids to head for a break if they are struggling. Student achievement scores for reading, writing, math, and science all rank above district and state averages.

Described as “a stellar cooperating teacher for student teachers,” Hajdun is observed by undergraduate education majors as a model teacher. A grade-level team leader, he mentors student teachers, holds a leadership role on Champlain’s literacy team, and heads the grade-level and data teams. Hajdun wrote and led a districtwide reading program and is active in multiple community volunteer roles, many of which deal with literacy. His guiding star: “What is best for children.”

The recognition is not intended as a lifetime achievement award. Recipients are selected in early to mid-career for what they have achieved... and for the promise of what they will accomplish in the future. Milken Educators point to their Award as a pivotal milestone. Encompassed in the recognition is the responsibility to stretch their professional practices and leadership to even higher levels.

Hailed by *Teacher Magazine* as the “Oscars of Teaching,” what separates this Award from others is that the recipients have no idea that they will be honored. Not only is the entire selection process confidential, but so is the real purpose of the schoolwide assemblies where the Awards are presented. The Awards story doesn’t end with the surprise notification. New recipients are invited to join the Milken Educator Network, a group of distinguished educators whose expertise serves as a valuable resource to fellow educators, legislators, school boards and others shaping the future of education.

The Foundation has been recognizing and rewarding the noble profession of teaching through the Milken Educator Awards for 26 years. Since first presented to a dozen California teachers, the program has grown to become the nation’s preeminent teacher recognition program having honored more than 2,500 K-12 teachers, principals and specialists with over \$63 million in individual, unrestricted \$25,000 awards. More than \$135 million in funding has been devoted to the overall program, which includes powerful professional development opportunities throughout the recipients’ careers in education. The exponential impact of Milken Educators is helping to improve American K-12 education.

The Awards alternates yearly between elementary and secondary educators. Each participating state department of education appoints an independent blue ribbon committee to review candidates that are sourced through a confidential selection process and recommends candidates to the Foundation.

### **Award Criteria:**

Candidates for the Milken Educator Awards are selected on the basis of all the following criteria:

- Exceptional educational talent as evidenced by effective instructional practices and student learning results in the classroom and school;
- Exemplary educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of excellence for the profession;
- Individuals whose contributions to education are largely unheralded yet worthy of the spotlight;
- Early- to mid-career educators who offer strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership; and
- Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

**View the 2012 Milken Educator Awards kickoff YouTube video for a peek at the surprise of a lifetime that awaits up to 40 of America’s best educators:**

<http://www.mff.org/newsroom/news.taf?page=videos&init=&dateYear=&vid=1200>

For more information about the Milken Educator Awards, visit <http://www.mff.org> or call the Foundation at (310) 570-4775. You can connect with the Foundation at [www.twitter.com/milken](http://www.twitter.com/milken), [www.facebook.com/milkeneducatorawards](http://www.facebook.com/milkeneducatorawards) and at [www.youtube.com/milkenaward](http://www.youtube.com/milkenaward).

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